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## ABSTRACT

Athletic programs in the public schools and colleges are often justified by assertions that competitive team sports build character and sportsmanship for participants and spectators, and that sports reinforce such school and community ideals as the virtues of competition, patriotism, and the desirability of healthy living. Spectator behavior at public and sporting events at an intermountain university was examined in order to determine the relationship between the type of athletic event and fan aggression. Violence and fan aggression were found to be directly associated with the type of athletic event; high body contact sports (football) tend to inspire the greatest aggression, while individualized sports (track) inspire the least; other crowd-related variables were also found to be influential. The characteristics of the "sports subculture," Short's aleatory factors of delinquency, the frustration-aggression hypothesis, and the concept of catharsis were employed in a functional explanation of the occurrence of spectator aggression. Ten hypotheses were developed and tested in support of the explanation, and recommendations for controlling or modifying spectator aggression are included. The authors suggest that individualized sports should be stressed more (along with the recommendations included for modifying spectator behavior) to counter the trend in sports violence. (Author)

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ATHLETIC EVENTS AND SPECTACULAR SPECTATORS:

A Longitudinal Study of Fan Agression

A paper presented to the:

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Abstract For  
Athletic Events And Spectacular Spectators:  
A Longitudinal Study of Fan Aggression

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The characteristics of the "sports subculture", Short's aleatory factors of delinquency, the frustration-aggression hypothesis, and the concept of catharsis is employed in a functional explanation for the occurrence of spectator aggression. Ten hypotheses were developed and tested in support of the explanation, and recommendations for controlling or modifying spectator aggression are included.

The authors suggest that individualized sports should be stressed more (along with the recommendations included for modifying spectator behavior) to counter the trend in sports violence.

## ATHLETIC EVENTS AND SPECTACULAR SPECTATORS:

### A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF FAN AGGRESSION

H. Rap Brown claimed that violence was as American as apple pie.

At the time that he made this assertion, he was most probably referring to such social issues as politics, economics, race relations and war. Only rather recently have writers and speakers begun to address themselves to the occurrence of violence in and around the sports arena. No American is really expected to hate dogs, or children, or apple pie; and, by the same token, each American is generally expected to fully embrace with all his being the "all-American" sports of baseball and football. This latter component of American life has been held forth so fiercely that the pitiful person who "does not follow" sports is often considered to have some kind of a characterological defect.

The possibility that there might be some kinds of social problems associated with sports first occurred to the author when security policemen in charge of a sports arena requested lectures and presentations which might be useful in their attempts at crowd control. The security police were faced with a dilemma. They knew how, they said, to control youthful aggressors at games and other events, but the incidence of such behavior was dramatically increasing. On the other hand, the policemen claimed that they were also confronted with a newer problem that caused some apprehension, and this was concerned with how they might handle the "little old ladies" and "grandmothers" who became embroiled in fistcuffs in the grandstands. Youthful antagonists could be physically broken apart, perhaps handcuffed,

maced, and arrested; but few of the young policemen felt that they would be comfortable trying to pin a 60 year old, grey haired lady to the floor in front of a cheering audience of 6000 fans. It was problems such as these, brought to the author by various law enforcement officials, that originally stimulated this research project.

### Background

There are several recent indications, however, that American youth may, in some places, be placing less importance on the traditional value of organized athletics. The editors of a small Iowa high school newspaper, for example, have complained:

"Oh, who wants to yell anyway?" "What's there to yell for?"  
 "Well, they don't yell for us; why should we yell for them?"

The other day one of the cheerleaders told me about the time they were doing "Two Bits" and two teachers didn't even stand up. I just guess no one cares about our teams - win or lose - any more.

Another gripe of mine is the fact that when there are basketball games, everyone (including actors, chorus singers and bandplayers) follows the teams, but when it comes to band concerts, music programs, or plays, who shows up? Parents, brothers and sisters, but no basketball players. Why don't we all support each other, instead of not caring one way or another.

I guess the reason games are so boring to some people is that we have won so long there is no thrill in winning any more.

We'd better stick with our teams (and other Fine Arts) all the way. We should take pride in our school, win or lose.

As reported in Newsweek, the students of Scottsdale Community College in Arizona mortified their administrators by insisting that their athletic teams be known as the Fighting Artichokes (rather than the administratively preferred Drovers) and that their school colors should be pink and white instead of blue and white. In attempting to de-emphasize athletics, the Scottsdale student body banned recruitment of athletes from outside the country and are attempting to cut athletic expenditures in the college budget.

Furthermore, some Stanford University students claim that their team should be called the Robber Barons as a tribute to the founder of their university.

Several writers have assumed ideological positions based upon the value and functions for both players and spectators. Scott (1972:49) has described two opposing ethics in this respect. The first, the Lombardian ethic, is based upon such proclamations by Vince Lombardi as "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." The Lombardian ethic equates victory with the preservation of manhood, and by promoting a "winning-is-the-only-thing" philosophy, attitudes and behavior are sometimes transformed into "the end justifies the means." Many critics feel that the Lombardian ethic appears to be the rule of the day from the professional ranks down to the colleges, high schools and junior high schools. Under this philosophy, the opponent is the enemy - an obstacle in the path to victory, causing some players to assert that "you almost have to despise your opponent or even hate him." Axthelm (1975:50) claims that Lombardi, Haldeman and other architects of victory have sold the public a new attitude. "Winning is the only thing" became a catch phrase, causing the sports fans of the nation to smirk, "Show me a good loser and I'll show you a loser."

The antithesis of the Lombardian ethic, according to Scott, is the counter-culture ethic, or "It's not whether you win the game, but how you play that counts." This philosophy would stress equality of opportunity for participation (including the sexes), perhaps the substitution of Frisbee for football, and an appreciation of player performance along with a de-emphasis upon keeping scores. From this perspective, it is argued that competition would indeed be a healthy, beneficial enterprise given that it might be experienced in a whole, nonfragmented manner. It might be expected that

the implementation of such a philosophy would directly influence the behavior of fans and spectators.

There have been, and still are, several obstacles to research in the field of sport. Essentially, these are as follows (Edwards, 1973:5-9):

1. Very few of those in the field of sports obtain a Ph.D. or a research degree. Most terminate their educational careers with a M.A. and, as a general rule, the requirement for the ability to conduct research is not included in the more typical job descriptions.
2. Very few investigators have looked upon the field of sports as an area of human behavior worthy of study. Most researchers tend to give their attention to those areas which the general public, governmental officials and funding agencies have designated as "social problems."
3. Sociologists have tended to view the field of sports as being "non-academic." Some sociologists, caught up in their own insecurities with respect to the professional scientific status of their own discipline, avoid the perceived additional stigmatization which might accompany the study of sport.
4. Sport professionals often will not cooperate with "intruding outsiders." Such professionals, who generally subscribe to propaganda that sports equals recreation, are likely to desire research findings which are immediately useful rather than objective and descriptive presentations.
5. Research funds for empirical work in the area of sport are rarely available. Granting agency representatives tend to feel that empirical investigations in the realm of "fun and games" are of low priority when compared to other apparently more urgent social problems.

Beisser (1967:225) feels that the general reluctance about penetrating into the meaning of sports is understandable. According to him, most people would prefer not to know too much about those things that they treasure and find satisfactory. For example, Beisser states that a man who loves a beautiful woman does not really wish to know anything which might detract from her beauty; it is claimed that this is the prevailing attitude of most

Americans toward their love affair with sports.

Perhaps another reason for the lack of scholarly attention to the Sociology of Sport might be the rather subtly pervasive political associations found in the area of athletics. Politicians very often surround themselves with professional sports figures, and it is well known that ex-President Nixon considered himself to be the nation's number one sports fan, perhaps now replaced by President Ford. Spiro Agnew (Edwards, 1973:92) proclaimed that sport, all sport, is one of the few bits of glue that holds society together. Gerald Ford's supporters claim that he is the most athletic of all our Presidents. Max Rafferty (Edwards, 1973:91), the former California State Superintendent of Public Instruction, quite vehemently asserted that critics of collegiate football are "kooks, crumbums and commies...hairy, loudmouthed, beatniks." Rafferty vigorously established that, "Football is war - without killing. Athletes possess the clear, bright, fighting spirit which is America itself."

The claims made for sports and its achievements are inherently conservative (Edwards, 1972:92). A 1971 Gallup Poll (ibid.) found that the more politically conservative a region of the nation, the greater the perceived interest in sport. This led Edwards to conclude that sport is generally conservative in its political influences and affinities.

Further evidence of the political conservatism of those in charge of major sports events is suggested by the fact that persons responsible for the major bowl games have, when approached, adamantly refused to permit pre-game and half-time activities based upon such themes as anti-war, anti-poverty, anti-pollution, and anti-racism. In general, most themes, often preceded by the Battle Hymn of the Republic, are patriotic presentations designed to



evoke emotional outbursts. One observer has even stated that he could predict which side would emerge victorious during a bowl game by merely noting which team was the more disciplined during the playing of the National Anthem (Edwards, 1974:94-96). Hence, there is little reason to believe that more objective portrayals and observations by the social scientists will be met with much enthusiasm.

### The sports-oriented American

Edwards (1973:4), during a heated campaign for the election of a new mayor in New York City, stood in front of a hotel and asked 150 passers-by the following question: "Who is going to win?" Of the useable responses, 27 people replied that "Lindsay will win." Six claimed that Proccacino would become the new mayor; one stated that Marchi would win; and 103 respondents staunchly predicted that the New York Mets would emerge victorious.

Most of the arguments advanced about the popularity of sports among the American populace, however, rely upon speculation and conjecture. While there is a general agreement about the fact that sports are quite popular, there is a considerable amount of disagreement over theoretical explanations which might explain the widespread appeal of sports.

Beisser (1973:ix-x) ventures that Americans are perhaps drawn to the athletic field because the events are analogous to critical life events. Everyone, he states, is both a winner and a loser, and spectators compassionately experience victory and defeat on the athletic field as though they were their own. People can identify with the "long shot" who courageously comes from behind to win and also with the apparent winner who collapses during the crucial play, for everyone has had similar experiences in life. Most people,

Beisser, continues, long to be members of an invincible team, and they have experienced the feeling of not belonging. Most have dreamed of the adulation of fans and the horror of a crowd that might turn against them. The athlete and his self-discipline reflect the ambivalence that many hold toward the rigors of life. Spectators in a fickle crowd can see their own fragile relationship to society; and those who look to the psychology of the athlete, the coach and the team in the context of our society are vicariously looking inward. Brower (1974) finds that journalists and social scientists claim that fun and games enable people to transcend the common and pressing problems of current life and to forge a rich fantasy world which frees them from everyday life. Another function, Brower suggests, is that sports-watching may legitimize a society's dominant standards and practices which justify and perpetuate the social, political and economic status quo. Brower argues that this may be useful to the power elite, for millions of people watch and listen to sports events and become socialized into accepting "appropriate" submissiveness and passivity in the face of authority.

There appear to be social class differences in the appreciation of various sports, in spectator behavior, and even in what types of activities are perceived as "sports." Stone (1969:10-20) interprets his data to mean that middle class people, especially males, are more likely to define a wider range of activities as sport (e.g., fencing, golf, tennis, etc.), to spend more time discussing sports, and are more likely to be spectators than are lower class people. Other writers, however, claim that middle class people are also more likely to read than are lower class persons (and, therefore, to be more aware of the different kinds of sporting activities),

verbalize (and, hence, to discuss sports as well as other topics), and to be able to afford the luxury of spectatorship. There has, however, been a tendency to view spectatorship as being a lower-class activity (Stone, 1969: 9).

Lawther (1972:79) assumes a peculiarly Marxist-type orientation in his discussion of the lower-class spectator. Introducing the concept of the "partisan spectator", i.e., one who follows the fortunes of a local team for a while, this is described as a kind of cathartic activity for lower-class people, frustrated people, and those who are socially maladjusted. Such people, Lawther feels, temporarily escape from the drudgery of life and their daily discomforts by undertaking spectatorship. They can then vicariously battle for victory and celebrate joyously if their team wins. On the other hand, they are also likely to become sadly and sometimes angrily and resentfully disappointed when their team loses. Lawther suggests that this is a lower-class phenomenon and can be mitigated with additional education.

Edwards (270), on the other hand, leads one to suspect that some of the more violent reactions which occur among spectators might be related to middle class social status. He argues that sports have a great deal of appeal to middle class males who are (1) involved in a continual struggle for instrumental goal achievement within established societal rules which govern such efforts, (2) but inevitably experience disappointments in terms of concrete gains which fall short of expectations given the efforts put forth and sacrifices made, but (3) can't resort to innovative behavior because of their having internalized established "blue prints" for social conduct. Furthermore, since they subscribe to and uphold the responsibilities for instrumental goal achievement, they are more likely to enjoy the game of football since it

reflects and encourages aggression. Edwards suggests that while lower-class people seem to enjoy baseball more than football, middle-class people find the former sport to be "too slow." Edwards claims that females and lower-class people are less "fanatical" about football than are the middle class males, and further, he predicts that with the increase in the proportions of the population that achieve middle class status, there will be a corresponding increase in the popularity of football.

### Fandom and fanaticism

The term "fan" is an abbreviation or a derivation of the word "fanatic" (Edwards:5). While Lawther and others, who sometimes appear to have vested interests in sports, frequently argue that spectatorship is almost inherently cathartic, there is reason to suspect that, in fact, the opposite effects are often achieved. As Cratty (1973:255) asserts, the fans' aggressions, rather than being dissipated by observing aggressive behavior in athletes, are often actually magnified by this type of experience. Generally, if the losing team in a sports contest becomes frustrated and exhibits aggression during and following the game, its supporters are also likely to be frustrated. Cratty, in line with the frustration-aggression hypothesis, claims that anger causes anger; an excited coach can breed excitement among the fans, and they, in turn, can influence the team members who might be seated in front of them. Brower (1975), who observed adult audiences at Little League Baseball games, noted that fist fights and shoving matches between managers and/or parents were sometimes likely to erupt. Parents who were seated where they could not actually see the game and incorrect calls made by officials, would often begin yelling at the umpires, apparently because other spectators were. Brower found that

few of the parents were well-versed in the ground rules of the particular game, but they would blindly follow the lead of a disgruntled team manager who might initiate a confrontation. Several recent studies (Report to the Surgeon General, 1972; Berkowitz, 1964; Bandura, 1963) have taken strong positions with regard to watching violent episodes - whether it be in the form of television, movies, or live adult models - and the subsequent aggression of the spectators, thus strongly questioning any alleged cathartic values.

It may be the aspect of spectatorship - the emphasis upon winning rather than on fair play - that distinguishes games from sport. Stone (1972:7) suggests that the presence of an audience alters the entire meaning of games and game playing. He makes a distinction between the antagonistic principles of "play" and "display" and argues that the presence of spectators results in the destruction of the play-content of sport. The sport then becomes a spectacle, or "display", and it is then played for the spectators rather than for the players.

Although there is some disagreement about the direction of its influence, most writers do seem to assume that a crowd does exert an impact upon the players. Beisser (1974) states that the crowd shares with the players the responsibility for his own aggression. By its shouting, the spectators share with the team members the violent impulses directed against the opposition. This sharing of otherwise unacceptable impulses allows fierce competition between the opposing teams, perhaps causing the athlete to feel that he is only carrying out the mandate of his fans and, therefore, any evil consequences which might develop are not his responsibility. Beisser points out that this was also true in World War II; many Nazis committed many acts with the support of a crowd, acts from which they would otherwise have retreated in terror.

Alderman (1974:23) suggests the interactive effect between the aggressive behavior of the spectators and the athletes. From his perspective, athletes who are aggressive in sports are rewarded, praised and reinforced for aggression; quite simply, this serves to make them more aggressive. Violence in sports is often romanticized in the almost awesome reverence that is seen in the way that adoring fans discuss "mad Dog Charlie," the "Brown Bomber," the "Purple People Eaters" or the "Fighting Broncos." Some players, in fact, appear to bask in the glory of being known as "animals." This is reflected in fan behavior and in their excited exhortations to "Kill 'em, kill 'em," "Fight, fight, fight," and "Tear 'em up, Braves, Pulverize 'em." Such observations are not particularly supportive of the argument that sport-watching reduces aggressive behavior in fans. For several years, as has been mentioned, imitation research of children and adolescents has repeatedly suggested that the cathartic effect of observing violence is questionable at best.

In summary, the above contentions would lead to the proposition that there is a reciprocal relationship between the spectators of a sport and the participants involved in the sport. There is reason to suspect that there are certain conditions which may lead spectators to become quite violently aggressive toward each other, and toward the supporters and members of the opposing team. This does not appear to be a uniquely American experience, for there have been reports of such outbursts on a massive scale in Britain (Taylor:1972), Mexico (Lawther:1972), Europe and South America (Edwards:1973).

#### Aleatory conditions and fan aggression

James Short (1969:210) has discussed the prospective importance and impact of the "aleatory" factor as one explanation of youthful misbehavior.

Aleatory factors refer simply to various behavioral settings which, while they do not contribute to nor cause misbehavior, may be associated with disruptive reactions. With respect to gang violence, Short enumerates such aleatory factors as: (1) a high incidence of gun ownership; (2) the inner-city trait of "milling" on the street corners; (3) "toughness" as a "focal concern" among lower-class people; (4) the high consumption of alcohol in public; and (4) the tendency to distrust "outsiders." Short strongly suggests that the combination of such factors can quickly culminate in gang violence.

There is ample reason to suspect that similar types of aleatory factors may be associated with spectator violence and aggression. Many spectators - especially the younger ones - are apt to find themselves in the same types of behavioral settings as has been stipulated by Short. Our own research, for example, has found that (1) some young people do arm themselves with various weapons in preparing to attend various sporting events, (2) there is considerable amount of "milling" behavior to be observed during and after various events, (3) "toughness" often appears to be a focal concern among some partisan spectators, (4) many spectators do partake of considerable amounts of alcohol and other drugs, and (5) there is a tendency to distrust, and perhaps even to hate, "outsiders" or those who are members of or supporters of opposing teams. Our own research has found that there is a considerable amount of aggression and violence which is associated with partisan spectatorship.

#### A functional approach toward spectator violence

The functional perspective presumes that if something exists, it exists because of the functions it performs. Thus, in order to understand spectator and player behavior, one might look to the functions performed by sports and

and spectatorship that encourage its continuation. An ideal arena for examination is the local school systems of communities, in that as a general principle, a school is but a reflection of the larger community and the community, in turn, often reflects what is happening within its schools.

Barker and Gump (1964) conducted an empirical investigation of the effects of school size upon student participation in extracurricular activities. They provided a rather instructive study by examining the year books published by large and small high schools. Students attending large high schools have to be truly superior in their abilities if they desire to participate in extracurricular activities. Further, a boy who is a star baseball player is rather unlikely to be active in other events such as music, drama, track and football. On the other hand, those who attend very small high schools are virtually compelled to be participants in all activities. The boy who plays baseball is also likely to be included in the choir, the high school plays, the track team, the football team, etc. Active participation - almost demanded as a necessity in small high schools - often instills a much stronger sense of identification with the school.

In large schools, however, those who are athletically inept, those who have only mediocre talents, and those who are considered as undesirables for various reasons by the school staff are quite likely to be excluded from participation in the formal sporting events. Those who become excluded frequently have another role assigned to them with respect to the athletic arena - that of becoming a spectator. In addition, there is reason to believe that such students are informally evaluated on their spectator behavior and, in fact, are coached with respect to appropriate behavior in the periodic pep rallies which might be held prior to various sporting events. It is probably



in this area that the young student is instructed in the unquestionable importance of organized athletics, that he further learns that he is unlikely to ever be allowed the opportunity of active participation, but that he must also develop a behaviorally overt response to vicarious experiences.

Friedenberg (1967) has provided some useful observations along this dimension:

High school athletic contests provide rich opportunity for observing pressures on the teen-ager and the emotional limitations of his role.

In small communities, basketball and football games create for the high school a recurring crisis in public relations. No other function of the school arouses such strong and complex emotions in adults; ranging from real joy in the vigor and prowess of youth to the most vicious and destructive competitive feelings; and this is a situation that is notable in our culture for permitting comparative freedom of expression. Student response is an important element in this spectacle, and high schools do not risk leaving it to spontaneous self-expression; it is structured by pep rallies, cadres of cheer leaders and other familiar devices. The result is that the young spectators whose individual responses might have been spontaneous but enthusiastic can no longer tell whether they are expressing their feelings or enacting their roles. They appear, however, to be more involved in projecting an "image" of enthusiastic support than in the progress of the game itself: they cheer goals and victory but not exceptional strategy of tactics except that the moment these pay off; and they watch one another to see how their enthusiasm is received.

Several personal observations support Friedenbergs characterizations.

Most students in high schools have attended pep rallies which, for some reason, seemed to lack "school spirit." The coach or the principal or the cheerleaders typically urge the students at such assemblies to "yell louder," to "yell like hell," and, in some cases, to even repeat cheers over and over again until the administrative representatives are satisfied with the degree of coerced exuberance.

Schools, in fact, often actively strive to develop a kind of "we-they" feeling, a type of "in-group - out-group" identification, and an intensive

type of ethnocentrism. Friedenberg (1967) refers to this as a "recurring crisis in public relations." Beisser (1967) claims that this particular attitude comes to characterize an entire campus, both team and fans, before the big game; and such attitudinal configurations often appear to take the form of "in-group virtues and out-group vices." As the big event nears, the students begin to recall or invent more and more horrendous stories of how "dirty" and "unworthy" their prospective opponents are. Often, by the time the team comes out on the field, the event has become a grudge match. Students sometimes will burn the initials of their own school on the lawns of the school of the opposing team which, of course, demands retaliation from those enrolled in the vandalized school. Such incidents probably occur on every high school or college campus, especially when the competing teams are "traditional rivals."

Schafer (1969) has described how high schools inculcate the importance of organized athletics on a mass basis. In the high school, where ever one might look, one gains the impression that organized athletics occupy a central place in institutional arrangements. A visitor, who first steps in the door, usually is first of all confronted by a trophy case. The vast majority of the enclosed trophies give no clue at all about the nature of academic enterprises, academic achievement, nor vocational interests of the students - most of the gold and silver cups symbolize victory only in athletic contests, and probably not one trophy which represents the "Thinker." The uninformed visitor might easily conclude that he had mistakenly happened into an athletic club rather than an educational institution.

Thus, in many schools, young students are perpetually surrounded by the accoutrements of organized athletics, they are repeatedly coached in the proper

procedures of fandom, and a parochial spirit of ethnocentrism is strongly supported and encouraged. As some proponents of professional sports have proclaimed, "Football is war...without the killing." Good competitors and good fans - like good soldiers - need to be initially hostile toward their opponents to ensure a good performance.

Edwards (1972:272) has provided a discussion of the functions of athletic confrontations and competition. Far from generating a spirit of friendly inter-group or inter-cultural relations, athletic confrontations between sports aggregations which have fan followings that maintain ongoing antagonisms toward each other may serve to precipitate violent outbreaks. Given the significance of sports for fans, and the dynamics of the individual fan's involvement in sports, fights after sporting events between fans from opposing black and white high schools are perhaps to be expected, much as social scientists should have been able to predict the "soccer riots" which have taken place in Europe and South America. Lawther (1972:80) has drawn attention to the problem which has arisen in many of the urban public schools, i.e., the outbreaks of fighting between the partisan spectators and opposing teams. The spectators, who become emotionally aroused, cannot dissipate their energies in play as do the athletes; thus, they look for other suitable outlets. Lawther found this to be so common in many urban public schools that night games have been abandoned as well as, in some cities, the Saturday afternoon games. According to Lawther, some games are now played after school on a Friday afternoon since fewer uneducated and uncontrollable fans are likely to be able to attend. In spite of this, Lawther believes that people really do need spectator sports as a kind of catharsis, but that many policemen will be needed at such events until such time as our general public becomes better educated.

There is, however, little reason to believe that "more education" is likely to work toward deterring spectator violence. On the other hand, it appears very likely that "education," i.e., the current practices on high school and college campuses, may be partially responsible for spectator outbursts.

Pep rallies, as Friedenbergr has described, are held in anticipation of games. At such events, a rather unusual observation can be made: this is the intriguing fact that, even in those schools which still adhere quite rigorously to the stringent dress codes which specify the nondisclosure of differing portions of the anatomy, ten or twelve of the most attractive (generally to be interpreted as "sexually attractive") girls are typically selected as cheerleaders. Dressed in tight sweaters (reminiscent of the once-provocative "sweater girls"), extremely short skirts and tightly clinging panties, such girls are then placed on public exhibition and exhorted to exhibit the newest jumps and yells. On nearly any other occasion and in nearly any other setting, such dress and behavior would probably be viewed as quite erotic and as ground for expulsion from the school grounds. To be more specific, it must be said that sex is employed to elicit violence and hostility from both team members and fans, and this activity occurs on a routine basis in our most sacred secular institution! The message broadcast by the sexy cheerleaders to the athletes (and to the fans for additional voyeuristic, vicarious excitation) is: "Fight, stomp, kill and pulverize...and we will be anxiously waiting to reward you when you return from battle!" At this point, the spectators could be considered as sexual voyeurs rather than sports fans - but the forthcoming fanaticism is, of course, being highly developed.

The problem for those youthful males who have been relegated to the perpetual status of fandom may be that of the necessity of establishing their own personal identities, above and apart that of merely being an invisible, anonymous component of the loyal cheering masses. As Gold (1970:98) and many others have suggested, one of the more important needs of young people is that of self-display. To obtain status and recognition from others, self-display requires an appreciative audience (perhaps this is why Friedenberg found that young fans will look around while cheering to note whether or not they meet the approval of their peers).

Having been well-instructed in the notion that one of the better ways of demonstrating one's school spirit and loyalty is by venting verbal atrocities at the opponents, the standard operating procedures of the competitive sporting event then begins. First, prayers might be offered to beseech the Divine Powers to help each contending team to emerge victorious. The national anthem is then played to a standing audience, reaffirming the fact that the forthcoming spectacle is blessed by both secular and sacred authorities. The game then commences, only to be interrupted by a half-time ceremony which is often based upon the message of the pre-game rituals. Throughout these procedures, the audience can be referred to as a "crowd", i.e., an aggregation of people who do, in fact, have a common focal concern. If the sports event in question is a "good game", the people become progressively more excited and out-spoken; they become increasingly more agitated and active in venting and displaying their emotions; the consequences of the game may be in doubt and suddenly...the game is over! One side, obviously has lost while the other has won. More importantly, however, there is no longer

one single, common focal concern. The aggregation has, by definition, been modified from the status of "crowd" to that of a "mob." Sociologically, it is a contradiction in definitions to assume that a mob can maintain a high degree of self-control. As the game reaches its climax, all the spectators and team members find themselves engaged in a behavioral setting which meets the conditions of Short's aleatory factors; in other words, the behavioral setting is one in which violent outbursts are almost to be expected.

At this point, youthful spectators may be faced with a dilemma. Having perhaps internalized a collective hatred of the enemy, there may be a residual feeling that something must be done. If their team has emerged victorious, it may be seen as their personal duty - at least for some of them - to confront the opposing partisan fans on the parking lot and once again "show them their place." If their team has lost, they may feel an obligation to seek revenge. In short, the younger fans may feel that they must fight somehow no matter if their teams have won or lost, for this is one of the few avenues left for self-display. It might be predicted that the lower-class students would be the most likely to become engaged in the more violent post-game episodes, for it is generally they who have been excluded from the team and, hence, from legitimate avenues of self-display. It must be recognized that lower-class males often do not have such opportunities due to such problems as disqualification from the team due to lower grades, a lack of school loyalty due to non-participation which can lead to exclusion, the necessity of maintaining part-time jobs which can cause them to be excluded from practice sessions, fewer opportunities at home to develop athletic skills, etc. For such teen-agers, the post-game rumble can help

to fulfill the need for self-display. In school the following morning, such teen-agers are likely to find a richly appreciative audience among their peers as they relate their parking lot prowess and display their bruises from the post-game rumble. Indeed, some teachers are even likely to listen attentively as such boys describe their abilities at fighting.

The preceding passages may be viewed by some readers as being somewhat critical of high school organized athletic programs. On the other hand, there are some writers who have attempted to demonstrate the "positive" functions of fandom, especially as it pertains to the high school setting. As Schafer (1969:32) explains, one of the major reasons for the great importance attached to organized athletics in the public school setting is because the school administrators have made that type of decision. From the perspective of administrators, the emphasis placed upon sports is done so because of another function: social control. One of the basic principles of group dynamics is that internal identification and solidarity is greatly enhanced by the perceived threats which can be born by various out-groups. By focusing the attentions of students outside of the school, and by giving them an opportunity to observe and participate in the struggle against an outside enemy, athletics may prevent internal conflicts and group tensions which might otherwise develop within a given school between the students and the teachers. The organization of the student body for the support of competitive sports may bring certain benefits for those who are interested in the immediate problems of administration. From this perspective, schools foment social solidarity and internal cohesion and maintain order by periodic declarations of war upon traditional rivals and other "invaders of the turf"

just as nations do. By focusing student animosities upon outsiders and out-groups, administrative problems may be mitigated and internal allegiances are enhanced.

Schafer (1969:33) acknowledges another social control function which can be served by the importance which is placed on athletics within the school. Often, length of hair, physical appearance, dress requirements, bedtime hours, and nocturnal activities are formally prescribed and/or proscribed. In this sense, athletes may purportedly serve as behavioral exemplars and role models for the remainder of the student populace. Athletes may be employed in this sense as an exemplary reference group in an administrative attempt to establish behavioral and attitudinal dominant group norms. There is little empirical evidence to demonstrate the efficacy of this technique, although Coleman (1961) has found that most adolescent males would much rather be remembered for their high school athletic abilities than to be remembered as a brilliant student or as the most popular person on campus. Such student desires, however, may be due to their perceptions of adult approval and rewards which are bestowed upon athletes. The senior author, visiting a junior high rap session which had been devised for "long hairs, freaks and those who are acting out", was told by these pupils that the principal did not care about them, that he only cared about the "jocks and the socials."

Lawther (1972:94) emphasizes that sports may be a strong integrating force in many societies, and this is perhaps the case within each respective school. Lawther claims that spectatorship offers an escape to unreality through vicarious experiences and emotional thrills. Heinila (1972:345)



believes that the great expansion of spectator sports in the more urban and industrial societies probably reflects the acute identification problems which detached, "lonely crowd" people may encounter. Such persons may have an urgent need to look for and to define their individual identities in terms of a group affiliation, however superficial and imaginary it may be. Beisser (1967:140), who also focuses upon the problems of identification in the urban setting, feels that social customs and the necessity of people living close together preclude a great deal of the spontaneous expression of primitive emotions. From his perspective, regressive behavior is acceptable within the matrix of sports watching. This provides such a person a peculiarly luxurious position in which he can vent his most intensive feelings within the camaraderie and anonymity of the crowd.

Finally, Heinila (1972) notes that it is a matter of common observation that team sports are more attractive for spectators than are individual sports. Heinila surmises that it is psychologically easier for the public and for spectators to identify with a team than with an individual. Somehow, it seems more fitting to exclaim "Our team won!" rather than to shout out exuberantly, "Our Ralph Smith won!" As a general principle, the public affinity for a team seems to somehow over-ride its appreciation for the individual members of that team.

Based upon the preceding review of the literature, several hypotheses have been developed with reference to fandom and fan behavior. The major hypotheses, formulated for empirical verification, are as follows:

#### Hypothesized spectator responses

1. Spectator violence and aggression will be more likely to occur during and after team sport spectacles than for individual sports.

(Spectators can more easily identify with teams than with individuals)

2. Spectator violence and aggression will be more likely to occur at football games than at basketball games. (Middle class spectators are more likely to identify with the greater extent of structured physical aggression necessary to achieve instrumental goals)
3. Spectator violence and aggression is more likely to occur if and when the losing team becomes frustrated and aggressive. (Anger causes anger)
4. Spectator violence and aggression is more likely to occur when one of more of the competing teams is sponsored by a large school. (Small schools provide more legitimate opportunities for student self-display; urban spectators seek more strongly for individual identities in spectatorship)
5. Team members are likely to exhibit more violence and aggression if spectators are present. (The presence of spectators changes the nature of the game from "play" to "display")
6. Spectator violence and aggression is more likely to occur at the end of a game rather than during its actual progress. (The crowd, with no common focal concern, becomes a mob characterized by certain aleatory factors which contribute to aggressive outbursts)
7. Spectator violence and aggression is more likely to occur at Homecoming games than during other, more typical contests. (More time and effort is given toward the development of in-group solidarity and out-group hostility by the sponsoring schools)
8. Spectator violence and aggression is more likely to occur at games which are played between traditional rivals. (for the same reason as H:7)
9. Patterns of spectator violence and aggression at college sports events will be similar to those which occur at high school games. ("More education" is not a deterrent to fan aggression)
10. Spectator violence and aggression is more likely to occur when the competing teams are from neighboring communities or schools than when the schools are geographically separated. (Proximity contributes to rivalry, with certain exceptions)

These hypotheses were developed through the research project described below.

### Research Methods

During the fall semester of the 1974-1975 academic school year, nine students served as participatory observers at a university sports arena to observe cases of aggressive behavior among the spectators. The student observers stationed themselves at strategic locations including the bathrooms, the exits, throughout the bleachers, and near the Security Office and the Ambulance Facilities. After the games, some student observers would wander through the parking lots and, occasionally, into some of the bars most likely to be frequented by the sports fans. One observer even established contacts with the janitorial help at a major motel in which many visiting teams stayed while participating in various events.

Throughout the academic year the students submitted periodic reports of each sporting event held in an attempt to cover anything considered to be either of sociological importance or of some significance in contributing to an understanding of spectator aggression.

### Findings

The first major finding was that the incidence of violence and spectator aggression was not nearly as frequent as we had been led to predict, but still enough events occurred to present a threatening situation. In conversations with the security police and other more permanent observers than ourselves, we were told that, for some reason, the fans seemed to exercise somewhat more self-restraint this year than has been the case in the past, however the extent of after game violence was greater than expected. There were several occasions in which cars in the parking lots were vandalized and automotive items were stolen. Again, some of the student observers,

after some games, would occasionally go to college bars and see post-game fights, possible spawned by the sporting event but which did not take place within the confines of the Mini-Dome. One of the more interesting reports of such behaviors was systematically provided by one student observer who was acquainted with the janitorial help at a local motel which generally provided rooms for visiting teams. According to this source, motel fixtures and supplies were often used as targets by frustrated team members. Toilet stools would be smashed, bathrooms flooded, and other types of vandalism could be quite extensive on various occasions. The same source claimed that two bartenders were employed when a visiting football team had rooms in the motel, but only one was needed to maintain order for visiting basketball teams. Therefore, it is to be suspected that by limiting our observations within the immediate confines of the Mini-Dome, some incidents of aggression may have gone unnoticed.

Insert Table 1 About Here

### Violent-aggressive behavior

Arrests: Arrests were not a frequent occurrence, in that only 3 arrests were filed with the city police out of 38 sporting events. However the authors did note that it is an unwritten, informal policy of the Mini-Dome security police to handle abrasive matters themselves unless someone has been observed committing a felony or a serious misdemeanor. Arrests seemed most likely to occur only when the suspected offender was unruly and uncooperative with security police, thus they do not provide a reliable measure of the number of violent or aggressive acts committed.

Weapons: In six instances, all of which occurred at high school football games, weapons were observed, generally while being confiscated by the security police. These weapons were generally of the home-made variety rather than those that might be purchased, i.e., no knives or guns were found. Examples of these weapons were (1) a set of nun-chakus, consisting of two wooden clubs tied together with a leather thong, similar to those used by some karate practitioners, (2) a wooden dowel with nails driven through it, to be used in the manner of brass knuckles, (3) a small hammer, and (4) a telescoping steel rod. Such weapons as these could be viewed as being a public display of machismo exhibitionism rather than of a specific intent to commit bodily harm, as in no case was an assailant observed using the weapons. If so, this finding would support the thesis that some of those who are relegated to the status of fandom through formal exclusion from team sports must seek out alternative patterns of self-display.

Fights: Fighting behavior was observed at over 60 percent of the football games, but only 40 percent of the basketball games. Of the fights occurring, over 90 percent were between local teams that were traditional rivals. Tournament competitions, involving teams from other regions, created little aggression (or interest for that matter) among spectators.

There did not seem to be any one particular reason which might be useful for explaining these fights. Some occurred in the women's restrooms, some in the hallways and corridors, and some at the exits and entrances of the Mini-Dome. In some cases, the fights would occur between two boys or two girls; such fights when between high school students, were usually based upon competing attentions for a member of the opposite sex and had little

to do with the game itself.

The student observers did report at least three more fights which were seen in local bars after the game. These, however, were not included in this study, although such reports do suggest that the extent of player and fan aggression was greater than indicated in this study.

Rowdiness: As may be seen in Table 1, there was somewhat more rowdiness at the college games than at the high school games. This is possibly because more of those in the college-based audiences brought alcoholic beverages with them, an act which is prohibited by the Mini-Dome regulations. Rowdiness, as used in this study, refers to a wide range of disruptive behavior such as (1) groups of people running out on the playing arena at inappropriate times, (2) removing the hats of security police and running with them, an act which seemed to be repeated rather frequently, (3) mobbing a referee or other official with no actual bodily harm being committed, and (4) jeering and harrassing half-time performers by various groups. Regarding the latter, this occurred on two notable occasions: once when R.O.T.C. representatives were presenting military drill routines, and once when a coach called a local college bar and promised front-row seats to drunken football players at a basketball game. The football players, with a barrage of epithets and explicit sexual references, reduced a visiting girls' drill team to tears during their performance.

Throwing: Throwing as well as "rowdiness" seemed somewhat more likely to appear at basketball rather than at football games, however this might be attributed to the differences in seating arrangements because at the basketball games bleachers are set up on the "turf" so that the fans can be closer to the game. It was often noted by the student-observers that the

most active spectators sat at the ends, rather than in the middle, of the basketball courts. This enhances the availability of prospective targets for those who might be inclined to throw objects. "Throwing", as used in this project, does not refer to the tossing of a single object, but to the spontaneous and simultaneous hurling of several missiles. The objects ranged from beer, wine and whiskey bottles to cardboard drinking cups and candy bars. In general, such throwing as was observed was directed at team players and sports officials rather than at other spectators.

Drinking: Drinking alcoholic beverages, an act which is strictly prohibited and rigidly enforced within the confines of the Mini-Dome, was much more likely to occur at the college events. The security police often stage "shake-downs" at the entrance of the Mini-Dome and systematically confiscate alcohol containers from entering spectators. In spite of such measures, a considerable amount of alcohol is still brought in. The apprehension of alcoholic containers often serves to produce "rowdiness" among the spectators. A few fans were physically removed from the auditorium because of drunkenness, and the student observers reported seeing a number of youngsters hastily removing themselves from the Mini-Dome, spewing a trail of vomit behind them.

Vandalism: Reports of vandalism and theft originated almost exclusively at the high school events. At one basketball game, several seats which were bolted to concrete columns were removed and destroyed. At another, some money was taken from the locker rooms where the players suited up. Cars in the parking lots were damaged several times, but since the authors suspect that several events were not reported, it was difficult to determine

how often this occurred. The senior author, in talking with students in the vicinity, was informed that some youngsters would quite often get drunk or stoned and engage in certain destructive activities while games were in progress. These pupils usually did not attend games since they could not afford to do so, they would simply wander through the parking lots. Such students, who seemed to be somewhat committed to delinquent life-styles, did not consider themselves as partisan spectators.

Other Behaviors: Smoking is prohibited in the Mini-Dome, but this was quite frequently observed. The student-observers claimed that security police enforcement seemed to depend on the age of the smoker, and those that were at least middle-aged were likely to continue uninterrupted. There were reports of illicit drug use, especially at the high school football games. College students, due to the constant surveillance of the security police and the potential risks involved, were less visible in this type of behavior.

Other Events: For the purposes of comparison of spectator behaviors, the student participant-observers also attended rock and popular concerts, a televised fight, a Ted Mack Amateur Hour, and high school drill team competitions. With the exception of the rock concerts, spectator misbehavior was virtually unnoticeable. At one concert, which featured the Carpenters, there were no incidents whatsoever. At four major rock concerts, however, there were two fights, two cases of vandalism, three incidents of throwing, and extensive drinking and drug use (so much, in fact, that it could not be enumerated by the observers).



### Conclusions and Recommendations

There are several limitations of this study which must be acknowledged prior to presenting recommendations for policy-making and additional research. This study was conducted in a rural, intermountain western setting and it is to be expected that quite different findings would be drawn from urban, industrial settings. The population observed was largely white and many of the informal social control mechanisms of a rural, family-oriented, residentially-stable, religious sub-society are still fairly strong. Additionally, a one-year longitudinal study may not be of sufficient duration for the accumulation of data necessary for analytical purposes, especially as this pertains to spectator behavior. Finally, in view of the above limitations, it can probably be claimed that this research project has produced a very conservative estimate of the scope, nature and extent of spectator aggression and violence which might accompany team sports. Studies of more urban areas are likely to be much more productive of data relevant to spectator behavior.

However, as compared to other situations which are likely to draw large crowds, it does appear as if formally organized team sports events can and do produce spectator violence and aggression. More individualized sports, such as track events, intramural games, and family-oriented programs tends to produce less aggressive behavior among spectators. Rock concerts, a type of activity which many people hold in disapproval, seem to produce no more nor less disruptive behaviors than do the nationally cherished games of football and basketball.

### Recommendations

1. As has been discussed, sporting events produce crowds. When the game is completed, however, there is no longer a common focus of attention for the crowd; by definition, the congregation of people is then converted from a crowd to a mob and self-restraint is probably not to be expected. One possible suggestion is that post-game programs might be developed to maintain spectator attention. Nearly all student participant-observers in this study, for example, claimed that during the pre-game ceremonies which were addressed to the values of religion and patriotism (the Star Spangled Banner and various prayers), the fans conducted themselves in a quite orderly manner. Perhaps such rituals should be conducted after each game, thereby diffusing hostilities, preventing mob behavior, and encouraging self-restraint. If it is true, as previously discussed, that sports fans tend to be politically and socially conservative, then it should be true that such people might find it difficult to vent their hostilities and aggressions on others when the sports announcer has requested them to bow their heads in prayer or to place their hands over their hearts in honor of the flag.

2. Although no such occasion was noted in this particular study, various security police have informed the senior author that they have had past difficulties with crowd control when they had to break up fights. According to them, when they would run as a group to intervene, many spectators would immediately follow and gather around them to satisfy their own curiosity. The security police claimed that this could often create problems that sometimes led to small-scale riots. In such occasions, it is suggested that a diversionary tactic be employed to distract the crowd. A squad car with

blaring sirens and flashing lights might be driven onto the opposite side of the playing arena, for example, serving to pull the spectators away from the intervention attempts of the security police.

3. There has been an emerging national movement to re-emphasize individualized, life-time sports. As has been discussed in the previous pages, it seems to be a general principle that most youths do have a need for self-display. Currently, the majority of such young people, at least in the larger schools, are systematically excluded from legitimate avenues of self-display in formally organized athletic team events. It is to be expected that if aggressive and competitive young people are not allowed to participate in legitimate, socially-sanctioned activities, they are likely to seek out other outlets which may not meet with the approval of the larger society. This new social movement, given that it is permitted to develop increasing social support, may produce quite positive results for those that have been heretofore "athletically excluded."

4. As has been mentioned, many sports writers feel that the most effective way to reduce spectator aggression is through more education. However, there is little reason to believe that educational attempts have done much to reduce unhealthy behavior, sexual problems, marital difficulties, international wars, alcoholism or automobile accidents. It is further believed, as discussed, that many of the educational processes as now employed serve to foment rivalries, inter-school hostilities, spectator aggression and youthful delinquency. Perhaps the best measure would be to open up opportunities for individual participation in sports activities for all young people and to reduce the obsessive emphasis which currently ensures stardom and glory for a relative few.

Table 1: Fan aggression at public events

	Violent-Aggressive Behavior				Unsportsmanlike Behavior			
	Arrests	Weapons	Vandalism	Fights	Rowdy	Throwing	Drinking	Drugs
Body Contact Sports								
Football (N=14)	2	6	1	9	4	2	6	4
College (N=6)	0	0	0	3	2	1	4	0
High School (N=8)	2	6	1	5	2	1	2	4
Intramurals (N=3)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Non-body Contact								
Basketball (N=24)	1	0	3	9	6	4	9	1
College (N=8)	1	0	0	2	5	4	8	0
High School (N=16)*	0	0	3	7	1	0	1	1
Other Events								
Rock Concerts (N=5)	0	0	2	2	0	3	4	4
TV Fight (N=1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amateur Hour (N=1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Drill Team Comp. (N=1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

\*Eight of these games were tournament events in which the teams were frequently from distant communities, playing together in the Mini-Dome. The other eight games were regularly scheduled events which generally attracted larger and more active audiences.

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